

Difficult Family Karma? How to Change It.

One of the reasons we practice faith is to be able to change our karma when faced with a difficult situation, to correct the fundamental causes which bring about suffering. Since family and relationship issues cause many to suffer greatly, let's examine how we would change karma in that kind of situation.

What is Karma?

In the west we tend to think that karma is negative. Actually it's just action, whether good or bad. When we think, act or speak a seed is planted in the core of our lives which will manifest when the conditions are right.

The Problem Has Both an Internal and External Cause

When you are facing a problem for example with a family member, the tendency is always to blame the other person. But from the Buddhist point of view there is an internal cause as well as an external cause to bring about the effect of the problem you are facing.

Let's imagine a glass of water with some sediment at the bottom. It remains clear until there is an outside event, the water is stirred. Then the sediment arises to the surface. But, if there was no sediment in the water, the water would remain clear when it is stirred.

Like that, when we are facing a family problem for example we would not be suffering if there were not an internal cause, inside of ourselves. The cause would most likely come from a past life where we created some bad karma probably by causing someone else to suffer. That sets a seed deep in your own life which manifested at some time in the future when the time is right. Your destiny is to suffer because of that past cause. Otherwise your family members' behavior would not affect you.

Nothing is just happening to you.. It is happening because of you and through you. This gives us the power to be able to change the situation, by changing our own karma.

Steps to Change Karma

Because of this we need to change our own destiny in order to shift the situation. In a Letter to Konichibo, Nichiren Daishonin says, "Even a small offense will destine one to the evil paths if one does not repent of it. But even a great slander can be eradicated if one repents of it."

So instead of blaming the other person, when we chant in front of the Gohonzon, we need to recognize and accept our own karma to suffer because of the current situation.

Then pray to discover what you need to change in yourself to change this karma. Remember our life circumstances come from the inside, out – oneness of self and the environment. This is frequently hard to accept because our culture teaches us to always blame the other person. It is also hard to accept when you would never have chosen to create this problem in your current life. But if you try to change the problem on the level of the effect, the current problem, nothing will happen. You must get to the fundamental cause.

Then the third step is to take action to change whatever you have discovered.

It's important to remember that the other person also has a Buddha nature. Your prayers for them will connect to that part of them. So pray for the other person to be motivated by the problem in his own life to be able to practice sincerely and be able to help others.

There is hope in this. When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and take action to help others become happy, then a host of karmic impediments can be wiped out by the sun of wisdom.

But we need to be patient and persistent. As Ikeda says, "It takes a great deal of time and effort to overcome sufferings of a karmic nature, whose roots lie deep in causes we made in the past. The difference in the time it takes for a scratch to heal and the time required to recover from a serious disease. The same applies to changing karma."

In Nichiren Daishonin's Letter to Niike "Our worldly misdeeds and evil karmas may have piled up as high as Mount Sumeru, but when we take faith in this sutra they will vanish like frost or dew under the sun of the Lotus Sutra. WND 1021

All the suffering you are enduring today will contribute in a positive way to your growth in the future. People who have suffered, develop deep insight and compassion which can help them support other people who are suffering. Your life experiences will enable you to help others and you can become an example and inspiration to other people. When this occurs you have not only changed your karma to suffer but have also changed your karma into mission.

Summary: Today we discussed the fact there is both an internal cause and external cause for a current problem. In order to shift the problem situation you have to address the internal cause which lies deep in a past life. When you change your destiny to suffer because of this problem, the problem will resolve. But we need to be patient and persistent. Some causes are like a scratch while others are like a serious disease. One takes longer than the other.

Once you have turned poison into medicine then your growth will serve to support others who are suffering as you were. You will have turned karma into mission.

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See you in two weeks.